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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Memorandum of Conversation

DATE: 9 March 1959

SUBJECT : Conversation with Marguerite Higgins

PARTICIPANTS: Miss Marguerite Higgins, Herald Tribune, and Mr. Robert W. Komer, CIA

COPIES TO : DD/I, Colonel Grogan, R. W. Komer

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1. Miss Higgins was transferred to me when the DD/I was not here this afternoon. Her opening gambit was that she was "damned confused" by the press reports on Khrushchev's remarks in Berlin yesterday. Apparently AP interpreted Khrushchev to mean that the troops of the Four Powers would remain in Berlin as a whole (i.e. some Western troops in West Berlin and some Soviet troops in East Berlin) whereas UP had the troops remaining in their present locations (or vice versa - she didn't indicate which side UP took and which side AP took).

2. I told her that I had only seen one ticker report and it was highly unclear on this subject. I doubted that Khrushchev had himself been very explicit. When pressed for which interpretation I would make I pointed out that all we had was the press ticker of this afternoon which was inconclusive, but that my own guess would be that he was not suggesting that Western troops be stationed in East Berlin.

3. She then went on to ask how one should view these indications of Khrushchev's flexibility. Did we feel that Khrushchev felt he had to get "off the hook" in Berlin. I said that one should always keep in mind the war of nerves on the part of the Soviets, in which they alternated suggestions flexibility with very tough talk. As for Khrushchev being on the hook it was hard to believe that he was panicking in the absence of any developments on our side which would

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compel him to do so as yet. On the other hand should keep in mind that Soviets presumably had maximum and minimum objectives on Berlin and difficult to say that Khrushchev necessarily felt he had to get whole loaf this time. Entirely possible that Soviets viewed Berlin problem in long-range context and would settle for a substantial weakening of our position as a result of current crisis, which would set Berlin up for further weakening later.

/s/
R. W. KOMER

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